

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

GARY D. EASLEY,) No. C 09-5874 LHK (PR)
Plaintiff,)
v.) ORDER GRANTING MOTION TO
COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA, SANTA) PROCEED IN FORMA PAUPERIS;
CLARA SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT,) STAYING PROCEEDINGS;
DEPUTY GERHARD WALLACE,) DIRECTING CLERK TO
DIRECTOR OF POLICE DEPARTMENT,) ADMINISTRATIVELY CLOSE
SANTA CLARA BOARD OF) THE CASE
SUPERVISORS, and CITY OF SAN JOSE,)
Defendants.)

Plaintiff, formerly housed at the San Jose Jail and proceeding *pro se*, filed an amended civil rights complaint¹ pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 alleging that various Santa Clara County officials violated his constitutional rights. Plaintiff alleges that on December 23, 2008, Defendants engaged in the false arrest of Plaintiff, illegally searched his car, and illegally seized a blood sample without consent, resulting in a variety of civil rights violations. Plaintiff seeks

¹ The docket sheet shows that on April 29, 2010, Plaintiff filed an amended complaint. (Dkt. No. 9.) On June 16, 2010, Plaintiff filed a motion explaining that docket number 9 was mis-filed in the wrong federal case number. Plaintiff intended to file a new action rather than amend the current complaint. Plaintiff's motion is GRANTED. The Clerk shall strike docket number 9 as erroneously filed. On August 13, 2010, Plaintiff filed another amended complaint. (Dkt. No. 16.) The Court views this amended complaint as the operative complaint in this case.

money damages. For the reasons stated below, the Court STAYS this action.

DISCUSSION

A. Standard of Review

A federal court must conduct a preliminary screening in any case in which a prisoner seeks redress from a governmental entity or officer or employee of a governmental entity. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a). In its review, the Court must identify any cognizable claims and dismiss any claims that are frivolous, malicious, fail to state a claim upon which relief may be granted or seek monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b)(1), (2). *Pro se* pleadings must, however, be liberally construed. *See Balistreri v. Pacifica Police Dep’t.*, 901 F.2d 696, 699 (9th Cir. 1988).

To state a claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, a plaintiff must allege two essential elements: (1) that a right secured by the Constitution or laws of the United States was violated, and (2) that the alleged violation was committed by a person acting under the color of state law. *See West v. Atkins*, 487 U.S. 42, 48 (1988).

B. Analysis

Plaintiff seeks damages for his allegations of false arrest, an illegal search and seizure, and municipal liability. The United States Supreme Court has held that to recover damages for an allegedly unconstitutional conviction or imprisonment, or for other harm caused by actions whose unlawfulness would render a conviction or sentence invalid, a § 1983 plaintiff must prove that the conviction or sentence has been reversed on direct appeal, expunged by executive order, declared invalid by a state tribunal authorized to make such determination, or called into question by a federal court's issuance of a writ of habeas corpus. *Heck v. Humphrey*, 512 U.S. 477, 486-487 (1994).

The Ninth Circuit has extended *Heck* beyond the context of convictions to hold that it applies to claims challenging the validity of an arrest, prosecution or conviction, such as those plaintiff presents here. See, e.g., *Guerrero v. Gates*, 442 F.3d 697, 703 (9th Cir. 2006) (*Heck* barred plaintiff's claims of wrongful arrest, malicious prosecution and conspiracy among police

1 officers to bring false charges). However, in *Wallace v. Kato*, 549 U.S. 384, 393 (2007), the
 2 United States Supreme Court held that the “*Heck* rule for deferred accrual is called into play only
 3 when there exists ‘a conviction or sentence that has not been . . . invalidated,’ that is to say, an
 4 ‘outstanding criminal judgment.’” *Id.* at 393 (quoting *Heck*, 512 U.S. at 486-87). The Court
 5 stated that the contention that “an action which would impugn *an anticipated future conviction*
 6 cannot be brought until that conviction occurs and is set aside” goes “well beyond *Heck*” and
 7 rejected it. *Id.* at 393 (italics in original). Although the Court was only considering when the
 8 statute of limitations began running on a false arrest/false imprisonment claim, the discussion
 9 quoted above means that *Heck* does not apply if plaintiff has only been arrested or charged, not
 10 convicted, which is the case here.

11 In *Wallace* the Court said that if a plaintiff files a § 1983 false arrest claim before he or
 12 she is convicted, or files any other claim related to rulings that likely will be made in a pending
 13 or anticipated criminal trial, it is within the power, and accords with common practice, to stay
 14 the civil action until the criminal case or the likelihood of a criminal case is ended. *Id.* If the
 15 plaintiff is then convicted, and if the stayed civil suit would impugn that conviction, *Heck*
 16 requires dismissal; otherwise, the case may proceed. *Id.*

17 Here, it appears that Plaintiff’s criminal proceedings are ongoing. Because Plaintiff has
 18 not yet been convicted and state proceedings have not concluded, the Court finds that a stay is
 19 warranted in this action. This case is STAYED pending resolution of the criminal charges
 20 against Plaintiff. If Plaintiff desires to continue with this case after disposition of the criminal
 21 charges against him, he must request that the stay be lifted **within thirty days** of disposition of
 22 the criminal charges or **within thirty days** of the filing date of this order - whichever is earliest -
 23 unless an appeal is filed. If he appeals, any request to lift the stay must be filed **within thirty**
 24 **days** of completion of the appellate process. Failure to comply with these deadlines may result
 25 in the dismissal of this action.

26 If the stay is lifted, and the Court finds Plaintiff’s claims would impugn the validity of his
 27 conviction, the action will be dismissed under *Heck*; if no such finding is made, the action will
 28

1 proceed at that time, absent some other bar to suit. *See Wallace*, 549 U.S. at 394. Leave to
2 proceed in forma pauperis is GRANTED. The Clerk of the Court is hereby directed to
3 ADMINISTRATIVELY CLOSE the case.

4 **CONCLUSION**

5 For the foregoing reasons, this action is hereby STAYED. The Clerk of the Court shall
6 administratively close the case until further order from the Court.

7 IT IS SO ORDERED.

8 DATED: 8/30/2010


9 LUCY H. KOH
United States District Judge